

# Director's Report

## January 2003

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WASHINGTON  
**HIGHER  
EDUCATION**  
COORDINATING BOARD

## 2003 legislative session opens with education priorities

By Marc Gaspard

The 2003 legislative session began Jan. 13 with a flurry of activities involving both higher education and K-12 issues.

An estimated 25,000 teachers, students, parents and others from around the state converged on Olympia for a "day of action" to defend voter-approved initiatives that require yearly teacher raises and smaller classes.

In higher education, presidents of the state's major universities were in Olympia to lobby legislators about the need to adequately fund state institutions.

Several Board members and I have attended legislative hearings and made presentations on higher education issues.

All in all, the year is getting off to a busy start, and we expect the activity level to remain fairly robust as we tackle higher education issues now and in the near future.

### HECB launches new Web site

This week, we launched our newly redesigned and reorganized Web site located at [www.hecb.wa.gov](http://www.hecb.wa.gov).

The new and improved site helps visitors quickly and easily find information about higher education issues and programs.

Policymakers and educators will be able to access Board reports and publications by policy issue and program and scan local news stories and national reports on issues involving higher education and related topics.

Students and parents will be able to link directly to a new "Paying for College" section, which provides guidance on saving for college, applying for financial aid programs, and searching for scholarships.

### Work on Master Plan 2004 continues

Board members and staff continue to work hard on the development of the 2004 Master Plan.

I am pleased to announce that **Whitney DalBalcon** will be working closely with our Board, **Ruta Fanning** and me to oversee the Master Plan 2004 development process.

The next few months will be busy as we discuss enrollment access and opportunity, tuition and financial aid, branch campus issues, and college admissions and transfer issues.

## Changes on the horizon for core course database at HECB

It's time for some significant changes to the High School Core Course Database.

Created in the early 1990s, the core course database helps high school counselors and college and university admissions directors determine whether students have taken the required core courses.

Students and parents use the core course database to help ensure students complete the right courses so they can enter a four-year college.

Although the original idea for reviewing high school courses had merit, the process did not work as well as planned. Collecting, maintaining and reviewing volumes of information required more time and staff commitment than anyone could afford.

In December 1993, the six public four-year institutions in Washington

agreed to dramatically revise the process. The burden of determining which courses and "curricular patterns" met minimum college admissions standards shifted to the school district.

But the process remained basically the same. High schools submitted their courses to the Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB), told the HECB which ones had been approved by the school district as core, and the HECB entered data.

Over the years, many other problems made using the database a frustrating experience for all involved.

After listening to thousands of counselors' ideas, the HECB has developed a new Web-based application to allow easier and more accurate upkeep of high school core course information.

**Robin Rettew** and **Pat Castaldo** of the HECB staff worked together to develop an intuitive, easy-to-use system that will go into effect this month.

Here are some of the features of the new system:

**1. Counselors will now be able to type in course changes.** This will ensure data is accurate and kept up to date. This shifts the burden of keying in data to the high schools. It gives them the freedom to make changes when it's convenient to do so, and it makes the schools responsible for keeping the data current.

**2. Course descriptions will be added.** This will help college admission officers understand more about why high schools consider particular courses to be of a college preparatory/core nature. As schools  
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## Two DHP Advisory Committee members say farewell

Two long-time supporters of the Displaced Homemaker Program retired from the committee in December.



Bev Neraas of Spokane was a member of the committee for 10 years, serving as chair from 1995 to 2001. She previously worked in the Self-Sufficiency Program at the Spokane Housing Authority. During

her tenure as chair, she was instrumental in bringing the members together as a cohesive group.



Nina Byrne, also of Spokane, served on the committee for 17 years, and was the committee vice chair from 1997 to 2001. She originally was recruited as a former displaced homemaker.

Under their leadership, the advisory committee developed Displaced Homemaker Program Goals and Student Learning Outcomes, recruited recent program graduates to serve as advisory committee members, and formally established the advisory committee as a working committee.

The two retiring members were honored during an advisory committee meeting earlier in the year.

## Changes to core course database will make it easier to use

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enter course information, a drop-down menu appears with examples of courses colleges generally will or will not accept.

**3. Comments will be added** on a course-by-course basis. This will allow the HECB and colleges to write their reactions as they review each course. High school counselors can write back and have their responses to the HECB or college review posted as well. Eventually, a high school counselor will be able to see, by course, which courses are acceptable to which colleges and universities, as well as which courses are not acceptable.

**4. Vocational/applied course equivalencies will be documented.** This will help college officers understand what makes a vocational class equivalent to its traditional academic counterpart.

**5. Reports will be developed.** The HECB plans to build a number of reports over the next year for use by high school counselors. One report will show which colleges have reviewed each high school's courses and when the review was completed. Another report will show how many students from a particular high school applied to a particular public institution, how many were accepted, and how many were enrolled, by year.

**6. Relevant links will be supplied.** In the spirit of one-stop shopping, the HECB has provided

links to sites with helpful information about college admissions, financial aid, GEAR UP, and other areas of interest to the college-bound student.

Beginning in fall 2003, the HECB will be sending out a letter to the school district asking for confirmation that all of the courses posted for each high school within the district are of a "college preparatory" or "core" nature. The decision that a course meets the definition of "core" remains at the local level as before—just the process has been changed.

### HECB staffer gets new role as columnist

HECB Executive Assistant Belma Villa has been chosen by the Tacoma News Tribune to become one of six new guest columnists.

Belma, a native of the Philippines, came to the U.S. with her family 12 years ago.

The State Board of Education (SBE) has recently approved a new high school transcript requirement.

All high school courses that are "core" must be designated as such on the transcript beginning with the 2003-04 school year.

In order to be considered core, the course must be posted on the HECB database.

The new system should be up and running by the time the new SBE requirement goes into effect.

In that time, she has displayed a deep appreciation for her adopted country.

Keep an eye out for Belma's thoughts and insights in the approaching issues of the News Tribune. Congratulations, Belma!

### GET program update as of Dec. 31, 2002



Current active accounts:..... 25, 691

Total new enrollment ..... 1,633  
for 2002-03 (compared to the  
previous year at 774)

Total units purchased: ..... 5.35 million

Total payments received: ..... \$172.2 million

Total value of accounts ..... \$239.7 million  
(includes future payments expected)